

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

*Please amend the claims as follows:*

**1. (Currently amended)** A method for preparing an endocervical fluid sample or a vaginal fluid sample obtained from a human patient for performing a diagnostic immunoassay method to detect whether the patient has been infected with an infectious agent, wherein the method comprises the steps of:

a) treating the endocervical fluid sample or the vaginal fluid sample with an agent to reduce an inhibitory effect of the sample on the diagnostic immunoassay method, wherein the agent reduces direct inhibition of antibody-antigen interaction by components of the sample by one or more selected from the group consisting of: (i) neutralizing components of the sample that physically block antibody-antigen interaction, (ii) neutralizing components which sequester the antigen or which modify charges on the antibody adversely affecting its affinity for the antigen, (iii) reducing inhibition of antibody-antigen interaction by making antigen available for antibody detection, and (iv) reducing or wherein the agent reduces viscosity of the sample by degrading nucleic acids present in the sample; and

b) performing the diagnostic immunoassay method in the presence of DNase activity.

**2. (Previously presented)** A method according to claim 1, wherein the DNase is present in an amount selected from the group consisting of: (i) more than 0.5 µg/ml and (ii) 0.5 to 100 µg/ml.

**3. (Previously presented)** A method according to claim 1, wherein the DNase is present in an amount selected from the group consisting of: (i) more than 1.5 units of activity per ml and (ii) 1.5 to 300 units activity per ml.

**4. (Previously presented)** A method according to any of claims 1 to 3, wherein the

sample is treated with an oxidizing agent.

5. (Original) A method according to claim 4 wherein the oxidizing agent is hydrogen peroxide ( $H_2O_2$ ).

6. (Original) A method according to claim 5 using a working concentration of hydrogen peroxide of 0.5% to 3% w/v.

7. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 1, wherein the sample is treated with a non-ionic alkyl glucoside surfactant.

8. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 7 wherein the surfactant is n-dodecyl maltoside.

9. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 8 wherein the n-dodecyl maltoside is present at a working concentration selected from the group consisting of: (i) 0.01% to 0.04% w/v and (ii) 0.015% to 0.03% w/v.

10. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the sample is treated with either or both of Polyvinyl alcohol (PVA) and Polyvinyl pyrrolidone (PVP).

11. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 10, wherein the sample is treated with PVA at a working concentration of between 0.01 and 0.5% w/v, wherein the PVA has an average molecular weight between 20 and 25 kDa.

12. (Original) A method according to claim 10 wherein the sample is treated with PVP at a working concentration between 0.2% and 2% w/v.

13. (Canceled).

14. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the human

patient sample is obtained as a self-collected vaginal swab sample.

15. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the method is for detection of *Chlamydia trachomatis*.

16. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the patient sample is a self-collected vaginal swab sample and the method is for detection of *Chlamydia trachomatis*.

17. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the method is a dipstick test method.

18. (Withdrawn) A kit comprising: a dipstick test apparatus for carrying out a specific infectious agent detection test; reagents required for said apparatus in order to carry out said specific detection tests; a DNase reagent for carrying out the method of any of claims 1 to 3.

19. (Withdrawn) A kit according to claim 18 additionally comprising: an oxidizing agent reagent for carrying out the method of any of claims 4 to 6.

20. (Withdrawn) A kit according to claim 18 additionally comprising: a non-ionic alkyl glucoside reagent for carrying out the method of any of claims 7 to 9.

21. (Withdrawn) A kit according to claim 18 additionally comprising: a reagent which is PVA and/or PVP for carrying out the method of any of claims 10 to 12.

22. (Withdrawn) A kit according to claim 18 additionally comprising: a non-ionic alkyl glucoside surfactant reagent as defined in any of claims 4 to 6 and a PVA and/or PVP reagent as defined in any of claims 7 to 9 for carrying out the method of any of claims 1 to 15.